

KANSAS CITY DISTRICT'S NEWS MAGAZINE

HEARTLAND ENGINEER



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MARCH-APRIL-MAY 2007



FLOOD EVENT

strengthens Corps and
Communities relationship



1907

2007

A CENTURY OF VISION, ACHIEVEMENT & SERVICE



Amelia Lambert was awarded the Gladys Davies Award for Administrative Excellence during the Quarterly Awards Ceremony. Read her story on page 14. CENWK-PA photo

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ON THE COVER:

Steve Iverson, Deputy District Engineer for project management with the Kansas City District, inspects sandbags to be deployed to Glasgow, Mo. Photo by Ken Holder, NWD



COL Michael A. Rossi

Assess Anticipate Act

This month I want to briefly talk about the flooding in the Missouri River Basin last week (early May 2007) and our response. I'll keep it short and briefly answer three questions: What happened? What was our response? What does it mean?

What happened? A line of severe spring thunderstorms swept across Kansas and western Missouri on May 6, drenching both with heavy rains, hail and high winds. The rains from this system have been filling streams and rivers as the ground was already saturated by the previous week's rain events. This has caused flooding in both states along the Missouri River and its tributaries.

In terms of flow, this was the fifth largest flood event since the '51 flood, with '93 being the second largest. By week's end, three federal levees north of Rulo, Neb., overtopped. In our district Area of Responsibility (AOR), no federal levees were compromised, and more than 25 non-federal levees were either overtopped or breached, inundating bottom land.

What was our response? We stood-up the district's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on May 6 and began fielding first-reports. By midday Monday, we had pretty good situational awareness regarding what was happening in our AOR—water levels, levee integrity, count of resources. By Monday evening we had a good picture of what the next 12-48 hours would hold. Also, by Monday evening we were in a "proactive" flood fighting stance. This is what EOCs (and particularly Army Operations Centers) do when they're at their best: they *assess*, *anticipate* and *act*.

You use all sources to *assess*: other agencies reports (Seattle District, State Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Coast Guard), informal and formal networks (levee boards and stakeholders) and our own eyes-on scouts.

You *anticipate* critical events 12 to 48 hours in advance. Where's the fight going to be? What do I know? What do I need to find out to make a decision?

We saw the critical fights to be at St. Joseph, Kansas City, Brunswick and Jefferson City—and developed a Decision Support Template (DST) to key our key decisions for the next step: that is to act. We sent technical teams to each of these sites to assist stakeholders, report findings and make recommendations for further action. We deployed liaisons. We engaged congress, the governor, SEMA and non-governmental organizations to paint for them a common operating picture of the future risks and likely outcomes. We distributed more than 950,000 sandbags to the point of need throughout the basin. We even coordinated the capture of two loose barges in the middle of the night.

What does it mean? Your response in this crisis portends three main things in my mind. First, you demonstrated our *competence* in a crisis. Believe me, *competence* is a powerful word and is too often minimized. Second, because of your demonstrated *competence* in crisis, you greatly enhance the *credibility* of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with our elected representatives, our local stakeholders and our sister state and federal agencies. Lastly, you've shown me that two months from now when I give up command, there will be no loss of *continuity* in our actions in an emergency—we've been tested and validated.

I absolutely could not be more proud of you individually and as a team.



1928-1937

The third decade of the *Kansas City District*

By *Eric Cramer*

World Events

1928

- ~The St. Francis Dam in California fails, killing 400 people
- ~Mickey Mouse appears in Steamboat Willie, the first sound cartoon
- ~U.S. Congress approves the construction of the Boulder Dam, later renamed the Hoover Dam

1929

- ~Canada and the United States agree on a plan to preserve Niagara Falls
- ~The Seeing Eye Dog organization is formed
- ~The Black Tuesday stock market crash on the New York Stock Exchange begins the start of the Great Depression

1930

- ~The 3M Company markets Scotch Tape
- ~While studying photographs, Clyde Tombaugh discovers Pluto
- ~The first night game in organized baseball history takes place in Independence, Kan.

1931

- ~New Delhi becomes the capital of India
- ~The Star-Spangled Banner is adopted as the United States National Anthem
- ~Construction of the Empire State Building is completed in New York City

1932

- ~Hattie W. Caraway becomes the first woman elected to the United States Senate
- ~The Revenue Act of 1932 is enacted, creating the first gas tax in the United States at 1 cent per gallon sold
- ~The infant son of Charles Lindbergh is kidnapped

1933

- ~Construction of the Golden Gate Bridge begins in San Francisco Bay
- ~Mount Rushmore is dedicated
- ~The Gestapo is established
- ~The chocolate chip cookie is invented

1934

- ~Adolf Hitler becomes the Führer of Germany, becoming head of state as well as Chancellor
- ~Persia becomes Iran
- ~The Dionne quintuplets are born in Ontario, Canada, later becoming the first quintuplets to survive infancy

1935

- ~Alcoholics Anonymous is founded
- ~President Franklin Roosevelt signs the Social Security Act into law
- ~Parker Brothers releases the board game Monopoly
- ~The National Council of Negro Women is founded

1936

- ~The 1936 Summer Olympics opens in Berlin, Germany, and marks the first live television coverage of a sports event in world history. African American athlete, Jesse Owens, wins the 100 meter dash.
- ~Nazi Germany reoccupies the Rhineland, making it in violation of the Treaty of Versailles
- ~The YMCA Youth and Government program is founded

1937

- ~Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth takes place at Westminster Abbey
- ~The first edition of J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Hobbit" is published
- ~Walt Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" opens and is the first feature-length animated cartoon

When a naughty child holds a thumb over the stream of water in a garden hose to spray the parental target of choice, the water's velocity increases, but its total volume remains the same.

Throughout the 1920s and '30s, the Kansas City District worked to apply this principal to the river, pinning its flow into one channel and narrowing its channel to increase its velocity, so that channel would remain open instead of clogging with sediment.

In the book "Soundings," by John Ferrell, George Kishmar, hired by the Kansas City District at age 17 in 1927, describes some of this work.

His first job was assisting the weavers who made willow mats used to stabilize the riverbank.

"My work consisted of throwing bundles of willow brush from the barge upon which they were loaded onto the mat barge. There would be five or six willows about an inch in diameter, or two or three about two inches or larger in diameter, about 12 to 15 feet long, tied in a bundle with thin wire," Kishmar is quoted as saying.

He made 14 cents an hour working in a shoe factory after being laid off by the Corps, but returned the next year for a permanent position.

The Kansas City District's primary focus through the early 1930s remained river navigation. Thousands worked along the river in the name of creating a stable navigational channel.

The work consisted of building structures to guide the river and work to stabilize its banks as Kishmar described.

All this work did not mean flood damage control was ignored, but the approach taken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and by Congress, since the original Flood Control Act of 1917 was a conservative one. It consisted



The Missouri River at Indian Cave Bend in Nebraska in 1935. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers used the Missouri River to create its own navigational channel in many areas. Photo provided

of levee construction, but made no provision for reservoirs to store and release water upstream to control downstream flows.

This began to change with the Kansas City District's "308 Report" issued in 1933, which made the first accurate study of the entire basin's hydrology.

The 308 Report recommended a combination of reservoirs and levees to provide additional safety during flooding conditions. It envisioned levees on the Kansas River at Topeka and at several sites on the Missouri. Although the report envisioned levees from St. Joseph to Boonville in Missouri, its provisions were mostly aimed at protecting local real estate, railroads and providing varying levels of local flood damage protection.

This era also saw the first authorization of a dam for flood damage reduction. Outside the boundaries of the current Kansas City District, the Fort Peck Dam in Montana was designed to work along with the river's levee system to ensure a six-foot navigational channel and to contain water in the event of a flood. Although the dam worked as it was designed, it was only the first step in the construction of a comprehensive flood damage control system. It would be built over the following decades along rivers in several states to reduce the damage from flooding, generate electricity and provide additional sources of water to many communities. Authorized under the flood control act of 1936, these dams would become a major mission for the Kansas City District in years to come.



The Missouri River at Indian Cave Bend in Nebraska in 1946. The permeable barriers erected by the Corps slowed the river's current, allowing silt to deposit and building new ground as shown here. Photo provided

Editor's note: Figures used in this article are taken from the book "Soundings – 100 years of the Missouri River Navigation Project" by John Ferrell.

(Next Month: The 1940s, The farmers, the flood and the World War)

Synchronized responses aid communities in Missouri flooding

By Alicia Embrey

What started off as a blip on the screen turned into a significant thunderstorm event, produced devastating tornados in Greensburg, Kans., generated flashfloods across the Plains and created major flooding along the Grand, Kansas and Missouri rivers, May 6-21. As storms rolled across the Plains, calls to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Kansas City District for water pumps were the first clue to an even bigger event to come.

During the early hours of May 6th Jud Kneuvean, Kansas City District Natural Disaster program manager, received a call from FEMA Region VII for two water

pumps to help with localized flooding near Manhattan, Kans., only a few hours west of Kansas City. "Calls requesting pumps and sandbags are not abnormal for many heavy rain events," said Paul Flamm, Kansas City District Emergency Management Branch chief. "But they could be a precursor, so we constantly monitor the national weather forecasts for clues."



Scott Vollink and Eric Shumate reading slop gages near Atherton. Photo by Jacob Mura

After the initial request for pumps more calls began to stream in. “Next was a call for sandbags from Kansas Department of Emergency Management at Barton County, Kans. Although Barton County is in Tulsa District’s area we had the closest sandbags and it only made sense to help,” said Flamm.

With more storm clouds on the horizon and after receiving the morning’s river forecast, the district’s emergency management team called district commander Col Michael Rossi recommending activation of the Emergency Operation’s Center to Level IV and 24/7 operations. “The national weather forecast indicated record stages along the Missouri River eclipsing that of the historic 1993 flood event,” said Flamm

Over the course of the flood event more than 170 Corps employees were answering calls for sandbags, pumps, water levels, technical assistance and request for interviews from national and local media affiliates. During a course of three days Corps employees responded to 58 media interviews.

As the Missouri River rose above flood stage, monitoring the crest and deploying liaison/technical teams to assist local sponsors became essential. Kent Myers and Willem Helm were appointed liaisons to the SEMA (State Emergency Management Assistance) EOC in Jefferson City, Mo. “We made it our goal to ensure that the communication lines from the local governments through the state to our EOC was clear and unimpeded by unnecessary hurdles,” said Helm.

“The SEMA EOC was located just east of Jefferson City with a great view of the Missouri River,” said Helm. “For the most part, Kent and I provided a great deal of technical assistance which was verified as needed by phone calls to Corps subject matter experts in the district. We also relayed any potential requests for resources or assistance to the district EOC, so there has ample to time to obtain the necessary resources. We also assisted the state by providing significant amounts of data and maps.”

The technical teams deployed to levees provided valuable support to levee sponsors. “We were concerned about the tie-back portions of L246, a federal levee along the Grand River,” said Flamm. “We felt comfortable about the main portion of the levee along the Missouri River but due to the amount of water coming down the Grand River we deployed a technical team to work with the levee district and keep us informed about the tie-back area.”

“Eric Shumate had been out there for a few days, so on May 12th we decided if the water levels looked



Scott Vollink and Eric Shumate check for potential erosion caused by a dewatering pump at Atherton. Photo by Jacob Mura

stable, he would return that afternoon. The sponsor was still concerned because the crest was at a historical high so Eric requested to stay,” said Flamm. “Although fatigued he didn’t want to leave the sponsor without Corps support. This created good will between the levee district and the Corps – we were there for them.”

By May 21 flood concerns had passed and the EOC returned to normal. “We are still estimating flood damage and preparing to inspect levees for damage,” said Flamm. “Although all federal levees performed as designed 17 of about 100 non-federal levees in the districts program were breached or overtopped and many more may have received some damage.”



Flooding along the Missouri River on May 8th threatened the Missouri River Area Office at Napoleon, Mo. Photo by David Hoover

Planting a legacy

Ranger plants 18,000 trees with help from local school

By Diana McCoy

A home grown effort of one U.S. Army Corps of Engineers ranger has been taking root in Hillsdale, Kan., for the past 20 years. Hundreds of students, teachers and parents from Hillsdale Elementary School and various volunteers took part in the annual Trees for the Future event at Hillsdale Lake in Paola, Kan., this year, marking the event's 20th anniversary.

The event, started by Jim Bell, a park ranger at Hillsdale Lake, is designed to interest and provide a hands-on program for children to establish wildlife habitat.

There are more than 8,000 acres of land open to public hunting for deer, turkey, doves, quail, squirrels, rabbits and waterfowl and staff at the lake continually work towards making the land the perfect habitat for the animals, according to Bell.

"With the help of the elementary school, we've recreated fence lines and split large fields with tree lines in order to reduce field sizes," Bell said. "I started the program because it sounded like a lot of fun for the kids to get their hands dirty and give something back. Also, the kids get a little ownership in the lake. These are their trees."



Jim Bell (left), ranger at Hillsdale Lake, presents a National Call to Service Award to Lloyd and Joyce Steele. The Steeles are a volunteer couple at the lake who have served more than 4,000 hours at Corps projects across the country. Photo by Diana McCoy

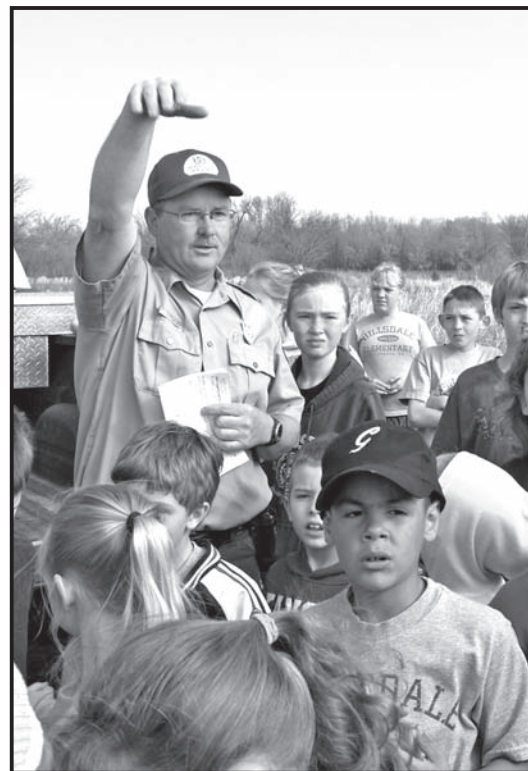
The efforts of Bell's program have already taken root. Trees planted 20 years ago are about 15 to 20 feet tall now and producing acorns and walnuts—all valuable habitat for wildlife.

"Everyone looks forward to this event every year," he said. "The entire Hillsdale Elementary School makes it out here, including the teachers and even a lot of parents."

Bell said they planted 1,025 trees this year alone, and 18,000 "wildlife friendly" trees so far throughout the history of the event.

"We've planted about 15 species of trees at 13 different areas around the lake," Bell said.

This year, trees were provided by the Marais des Cygnes Riparian Program, but in the past, trees have been provided by the National Tree Trust, Quail Unlimited, Miami County Conservation District, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



Volunteer Award

Special for this year was an award presented to a volunteer couple at the project.

"We are surprising a volunteer couple today with a National Call to Service Award," Bell said. "It's for volunteers who serve at least 4,000 hours. I think by the end of the summer, they'll have racked up around 10,000 volunteer hours."

The volunteer couple was Lloyd and Joyce Steele who said they have been volunteering since 1998.

"We were school teachers in South Carolina, and volunteers were so important to us, so we know the value of volunteering," Mrs. Steele said. "We wanted to volunteer, too, but not necessarily in a teaching status."

The Steeles said they have volunteered for the Corps in Alaska, New Mexico and Kansas. This is their second year volunteering at Hillsdale Lake. Mr. Steele said they wanted to see a different part of the country other than South Carolina, and that's why they bought their RV and have traveled throughout the United States.

"We were really surprised about the award," said Mrs. Steele. "It was really nice."

Information about the award can be found at the President's Volunteer Service Award Web site, which

says, "The President's Council on Service and Civic Participation created the President's Volunteer Service Award program as a way to thank and honor Americans who, by their demonstrated commitment and example, inspire others to engage in volunteer service."

The Planting

Students enjoyed a break from the classroom with 70 degree weather and slight winds.

"This is my third year coming out here to plant trees," said Cindy Graves, a parent who was there with her two sons.

"We've planted eight trees so far," said Alecs Burger, a third grader who was working with his friend, Zane Clark. "That's a record!"

"Yeah," said Clark. "It's pretty fun when the weather is nice."

Bell said one of the fifth grade teachers thanked him for keeping the program going.

"She thinks the kids really need programs like this," Bell said. "She's been here for all 20 years and said there's at least three generations of people coming back to this event now."

Bell said he plans on continuing this event in the future as long as there is a need for new planting sites, which, he added, won't be hard to find on a 13,000-acre project.

"I think this year's event went really well," Bell said. "We had about a half an inch of rain a few days after the planting, so I think the trees will do really well."



Zane Clark (below) and Alecs Burger, third graders at Hillsdale Elementary, work together to plant a tree during the Trees for the Future event at Hillsdale Lake in Kansas. The entire school, to include teachers and parents, has been coming to the lake every spring for the past 20 years to plant trees.

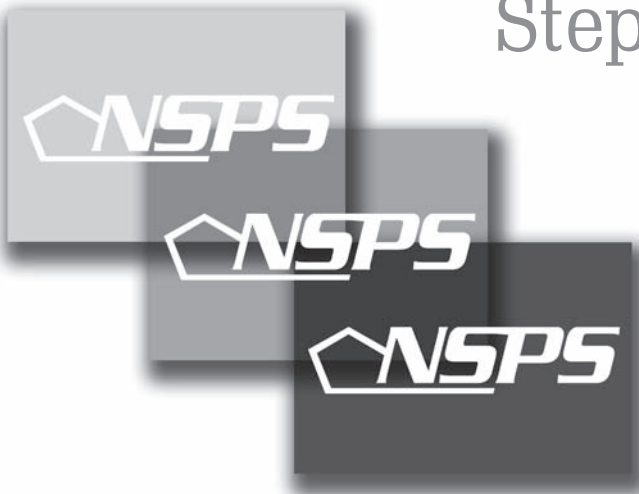
Photo by Diana McCoy



Students of Hillsdale Elementary School look at an empty field while Jim Bell (left) explains how and where to plant the trees. Bell has been leading this tree-planting effort for the past 20 years. Photo by Diana McCoy



Steps to aligning the district's workforce



NSPS - Performance Based It's Up to You



Thinking About Your Job

Before you meet with your supervisor to discuss your performance plan, you want to think about

- What I do and how I perform my job duties
- How I contribute to the work that my group accomplishes
- How I support my team in working toward its goals
- How to capitalize on my strengths
- Where I need to improve and what support I need

Give yourself time to think about what you want to say and what you need to continue to be successful.

The key activities you work on should be made into performance objectives. Typically employees have between one and eight performance objectives. The number of performance objectives depends on the nature of your work. When writing your performance objectives, remember:

Your performance objectives should be clear, concise, and measurable. Describe the specifics of what you plan to accomplish during the year and focused on results.

It's Up to You

You work hard everyday, and you deserve to get credit for it. Having a clear understanding of what you are held accountable for, how you will be evaluated and what role you play in helping your organization achieve its goals are critical elements to a fulfilling career. It starts with you taking responsibility of making sure that you and your supervisor have a mutual understanding of these elements.

- Establishing your performance objectives
- Discussing your performance objectives, career goals and developmental needs with your supervisor
- Monitoring your performance
- How to capitalize on your strengths

What Does Success Look Like?

Take a moment to think about

- What success means to me
- How I identify it
- How to work towards achieving my goals
- How I evaluate my contribution and how I want my supervisor to evaluate my contribution

As you do this, you may want to ask yourself

- What defines success in my organization?
- What behaviors do I need to demonstrate to indicate success?
- What results do I want to achieve and how can they be measured?
- What does my organization need from me in order to succeed?
- Can I explain my performance with concrete examples?

A few things to keep in mind

- This should not be complicated
- This is not about being a good writer
 - it is about effectively documenting what you want to accomplish during the year
- This is a chance to think about what you want to do with your career and what opportunities you need to take advantage of to acquire the knowledge, skills and abilities you need to progress

At the beginning of the performance cycle, you and your supervisor should meet to discuss your work and the key activities you will engage in throughout the year and how you want to communicate with each other. This meeting is your opportunity to discuss with your supervisor what you should be focusing on so that you have shared expectations. During this meeting you also should discuss any developmental needs you have identified and request support from your supervisor. The support you receive may come in the form of training, mentoring, coaching or some other way that would be helpful for you. The conversation should serve as the foundation for an ongoing dialogue between you and your supervisor.

Monitoring Your Success

At regular intervals you and your supervisor should check in with each other to make sure you are on track to achieve your objectives. These sessions can occur through brief meetings or e-mail exchanges. How you communicate with your supervisor depends on you and your supervisor's work styles and preferences. If the work you do has changed because your organization has taken on a new or different focus, then your objectives will also need to change to ensure your work is aligned with organizational goals.

As you monitor your performance, you will be able to identify strengths and examples of success. You will be able to see how you did and what you can do to repeat your successes. In addition, you will be able to note weaknesses and shortfalls as they happen. By taking time on a regular basis to monitor your performance, you have plenty of time to improve your performance, if necessary, before the performance cycle ends.

Communicating Your Accomplishments

It is your responsibility to communicate what you have achieved. It is your supervisor's responsibility to help you achieve your objectives by creating an environment that fosters success. Because you have been having discussions with your supervisor, the results of your final meeting to discuss your accomplishments and performance rating should not be a surprise. Rather the meeting should be an opportunity to discuss how you have translated the objectives you established at the beginning of the cycle (or the ones you revised during the year, if that happened) into accomplishments.

As you document your accomplishments, you need to

- Write them in a clear and concise manner
- Identify specific examples of what you achieved
- Demonstrate how your accomplishments support your organization achieving its goals

During this session, it is also a good idea for you to

- Identify areas that you would like to improve
- Revisit your career goals
- Discuss what opportunities you were able to take advantage of during the year to enhance your knowledge, skills and abilities

Working in an organization where you know what is expected of you, where you have a shared vision of what you need to accomplish and where you receive ongoing feedback about your performance is a recipe for success.

NSPS encourages you to take ownership of your performance.



Winnie W. Cox, a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers distinguished civilian.

Photo provided by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Generations of Women *Moving History Forward*

As the nation celebrates Women's History Month, this year's theme, "Generations of Women Moving History Forward," lends an opportune time to touch upon the career of a woman from an earlier generation who blazed an advancement trail for future U.S. Army Corps of Engineers women.

In July 1917, 24-year-old Winnie W. Cox passed the departmental clerk civil service examination. Although she had completed a two-year college degree and was a teacher the previous three years, prior to 1919, women were excluded from taking more than half of all civil service examinations and were overwhelmingly limited to filling clerical positions. Miss Cox was hired in the Quartermaster General's Office of the War Department earning \$1,000 a year. By 1940 she had progressed to a CAF 6 (clerical, administrative, and fiscal services grade) chief clerk in the building section of the military construction division. In December 1941, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers took over military construction responsibilities from the Quartermaster Department, and Miss Cox became a Corps employee. Moving up the promotion ladder from junior to senior administrative assistant, Miss Cox ultimately retired as a GS-13 as

chief of the Employee Utilization Branch supervising 25 personnel technicians in the Office of the Chief of Engineers—but her move up the ladder wasn't an easy one. Despite later finishing her four-year degree at night at The George Washington University, consistently achieving outstanding efficiency ratings and mastering greater responsibilities, Miss Cox struggled to break out of the traditional women's administrative roles and her promotions often were met with resistance in what was a male dominated world—after all, women were not allowed to vote until three years after she began her career.

Miss Cox dedicated her entire government career to serving the Quartermaster General's Office and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Her dedication eventually served her well amongst her peers and superiors and earned her a spot as a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' distinguished civilian.

In an era of discrimination towards women, no doubt Miss Cox's tenacity and perseverance helped pave the way for future generations of Corps women to break through the glass ceiling and achieve deserved success in their careers.

NSPS done RIGHT



I am serving as the district transition manager for NSPS, and because of this, I am the champion for the fiscal year 2007 campaign goal called “NSPS Done Right.” I am greatly assisted with this project by Ed Bristow, the project manager, and Eileen Nistetter (along the rest of our great CPAC office).

First things first—what is NSPS? Trying to briefly describe NSPS is like trying to stuff an elephant into a tube of toothpaste, but I’ll attempt it anyways. Briefly, NSPS is a new evaluation system that is expected to gradually be phased in to replace the current TAPES system. It stands for the National Security Personnel System and is focused on pay-for-performance. Right now, supervisors write evaluations and may include a performance award. This new system integrates those two things so your evaluation will help determine your performance award amount. A pay pool panel reviews the evaluations and finalizes award amounts.

In addition to changing evaluations and performance awards, NSPS will be more flexible, removing the matrix system under TAPES with grades and steps. Instead, NSPS uses pay bands which are a broad range of positions. It allows supervisors more flexibility to assign tasks and adjust employee salaries based on workload.

It’s important to recognize what will not change under NSPS. Fundamental concepts that will not change under NSPS include: merit systems principles (for example, selection and advancement based

on qualifications, fair and open competition, etc.), leave and work schedules, Fair Labor Standards Act, anti-discrimination laws, due process, veterans’ preference rights protection and rules against prohibited personnel practices (like, coercing political activity, etc.).

So why are we converting to NSPS? There are several reasons. One is that our chain of command is directing it! Another is the current evaluation system is inflated. Many employees receive an excellence rating, which makes it difficult to identify the very best from the very good. If many people receive an excellence rating, but the quality of work really ranges from marginal to good to excellent, then what’s the value in the evaluation? How do you distinguish between the great and average performers? NSPS intends to help correct some of these problems. I encourage you to look at the additional information on our CPAC’s intranet page (<https://w3.nwk.usace.army.mil/subpage.cfm?page=HR>) for more information on what NSPS is about.

In summary, NSPS means change. Transition to NSPS is important to the district because it alters the evaluation system significantly, and once you’re in this system, it will affect how people are hired, how they are counseled and evaluated and how monetary awards are determined.

What does “NSPS Done Right” mean exactly?

Colonel Rossi saw that NSPS would be a significant event for the district and wanted to make sure the implementation went as well as possible. He included “NSPS Done Right” as one of the district’s eight key strategies for 2007. Many NSPS requirements are directed from higher and don’t offer a lot of maneuver room.

What the district is doing under this strategy is to implement NSPS as best as we can. We’ve formed a transition team consisting of people from across the district to assist with this change. We’ve planned a mock pay pool as a trial run for the rating chain to practice writing their evaluations and as a dry run for the pay pool panel. This panel will share lessons learned from this process so that we’re better prepared for the final evaluations at the end of the fiscal year.

What does it mean to you, the employee?

It depends on where you sit. Supervisors in the district have already converted to NSPS. They’ve received the necessary training in preparation for this transition. If you’re a supervisor, you’ll soon be going through interim evaluations and a mock pay pool process.

continued on page 15

Postcards from Iraq

Working ourselves out of a job....

by Thomas A. O'Hara
Kansas City District

The more things stay the same, the more they change. That may sound backwards to the cliché most folks say, but it is appropriate here in Iraq. As I complete my third tour in Iraq, and after having spent portions of four of the last five years as part of the efforts on the ground in Iraq, I leave here—again—with a sense of pride in not only my organization, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—but another verification of my belief that the Iraqi people are some of the most wonderful people on the face of this earth.

I know when I go home I'll be asked the questions: "What was it like?" "How bad is it?" "Why are we there?" "Why do you keep going back?" The answers will be the same. "Not as bad as you hear on TV." "Was an incredible experience." "We're there to help these amazing people build a foundation for freedom." "Because I believe in the mission and we should be there."

When they get past the questions that they would not still be asking if this effort was being properly conveyed by the national media, I'll also tell them that I saw incredible progress on this last tour. Not only are Iraqis taking the lead in the construction and management of essential services, not only is their infant government working through the kinks of managing billion dollar budgets and coordinating activities across the nation, but with respect to my lane—the Iraqis are taking the lead in communicating to Iraqis on the progress on the ground.

This tour I was fortunate to work with more and more Iraqi patriots who challenge the threat of public identification and face the fear instilled by criminal militant gangs. As a public affairs officer, the more the Iraqi people that can communicate the story, the less there is need for me on the ground here to assist.



I have never been more proud to be worked out of a job. This is still the greatest story not being told. The U.S. should not only be proud of our troops, but proud of the job they are doing, and succeeding here on the ground. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is breaking ground and continues to show progress four years past the liberation of Iraq. More than 3,000 projects completed, 1,000 more ongoing or planned. Hundreds of schools renovated, nearly two dozen hospital projects, more than 100 primary health centers being constructed, 75 percent of the country with twice as much power than ever before ... the progress on the ground is a laundry list of sweat, tears and blood by coalition and Iraqi servants.

I am proud, damn proud, to be a part of it.

ESSAYSON!

Press conferences like this one illustrate how much more the story of Iraq is being told to Iraqis by Iraqis. (Photo by PAO Lee)



The 'Tony Snow for Iraq', Dr. Ali Aldabbagh, Spokesman for the Government of Iraq, is a prime example of the leaps forward made by the GoI to manage their own country, and communicate themselves, the progress on the ground. Much different than in the past, the US role is now to support GoI functions.

BRANCH SECRETARY WINS GLADYS DAVIES

She has worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers since July of 2000 and has held her current position for four years, and she was recently awarded the Gladys Davies Award for Administrative Excellence.

The award was first given out in 1996 to boost the morale of all personnel working in a GS-7 or below administrative position. It is named after Gladys Davies, a secretary who worked for the Kansas City District from 1936 to 1973 and served 17 different district commanders.

Amelia Lambert began her federal career seven years ago when she came to work for Dave Mathews as a secretary for the dam safety section. Since then, she has moved around a few of the sections, received a promotion to branch secretary and

again ended up working for Mathews who nominated her for the award.

"Dave hired me as his secretary when he was the section chief for what was at that time the dam safety section," Lambert said. "Then, after moving around a few more times, when the branch secretary position opened up for the Geotechnical Branch, I applied for it and got back to my original supervisor."

Lambert said receiving the award was a big surprise to her.

"It means a lot to me that I was nominated—that my supervisor would take the time and trouble to nominate me really means so much," Lambert said.

Mathews said Lambert's outstanding public service provides an example for others to follow.

"Amelia routinely takes on added responsibility and goes out of her way to help others," Mathews said. "Specifically, she assumed many extra duties during the last two years while at least one, and frequently two, section secretary positions were vacant. Her highly dedicated service during this time was critical as it coincided with the Military Program roughly doubling in size. Also, there was a dramatic increase in the number of projects being handled by branch staff."

Mathews explained Lambert exhibits excellent teamwork with other administrative staff. He said she cares deeply for other people and spends extra time while training new secretaries to be sure in addition to understanding their technical job

BRANCH SECRETARY WINS GLADYS DAVIES

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functions, they feel welcome in their new work environment.

"Her interaction with others and her up-beat, positive attitude contributes significantly to the morale of others within the organization," Mathews said. "Amelia's exceptional support to the technical staff contributes significantly to the success of the district."

Lambert said she loves her job and the people she works with.

"I like the fact that I'm usually learning something on a fairly regular basis, and that keeps me on my toes," she said.

NSPS DONE RIGHT

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These practice evaluations will go through the new NSPS process. Most evaluations will be reviewed by a pay pool panel lead by Col. Rossi and other senior leaders from the district. This will help everyone involved, the employee, rater, senior rater and the pay pool panel as they go through a trial run before the actual evaluations are completed in October of this year.

More employees will likely transition to NSPS in the next year or so. The next group will likely consist of non-bargaining unit employees in professional positions. Even more positions, possibly including bargaining unit positions, may convert after the courts system resolve disputes with this system.

If you're in this next group and are anxious about transitioning to NSPS, look at the information that's available on CPAC's intranet site. Before you transition you'll receive a full day of training on NSPS to

WATER SAFETY - ALWAYS WEAR YOUR LIFE JACKET



The graphic features a large background image of a lake with a small boat in the distance. In the foreground, a woman in a life jacket is talking to a child. To the right, a man in a life jacket is also visible. The text "There's a Corps Lake Near You" is prominently displayed in a large, bold font. Below it, the website "WWW.CORPSLAKES.US" is written. The US Army Corps of Engineers logo is in the top left corner.

There's a Corps Lake Near You

US Army Corps of Engineers

WWW.CORPSLAKES.US

better explain this new system and ask questions.

Will NSPS solve all these problems? There's no guarantee, of course. NSPS does offer both improvements and some challenges. Some things within NSPS are beyond our control, but there are aspects the district can get involved in and influence. That's a part of this campaign plan, "NSPS Done Right." It will increase the amount of time a supervisor will need to spend doing counseling and other human relations work. Overall, the intent is to recognize and reward the full spectrum of performers, from the truly exceptional, to the solid performer, to those needing improvement.

CALL TO RETIREES

The Heartland Engineer is now available online. It can be accessed at www.nwk.usace.army.mil. Click on the Heartland Engineer magazine on the right side of the page.

In an effort to improve our retiree database by adding email addresses to alert retirees of unique opportunities, please contact the Public Affairs Office.

Also, if you would like to be taken off the mailing list and receive a notification by email each month when the newest issue is published, please contact the Public Affairs at (816) 389-3486.



Tobacco Bend flowing into Rock Bluff Bend along the Missouri River in Nebraska. This photo was taken in August of 1934. Photo provided

1928-1937



Brownville Dike along the Missouri River in Nebraska at river mile 577. This photo was taken in April of 1935. Photo provided

Kansas City District History

- ~**1929** - The Great Depression begins; river traffic declines.
- ~**1933** - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Kansas City District completes its 308 Plan as required by the 1926 Congressional direction. The plan calls for a six-foot navigable channel from Kansas City to the mouth.
- ~**1933** - The development and construction of a reservoir at Fort Peck, Mont., takes place.
- ~**1933** - The expansion of the existing navigation project to provide an eight to nine foot navigable channel from Yankton, S.D., to the mouth takes place.
- ~**1933** - Construction begins for a reservoir near Topeka, Kan.
- ~**1935** - Federal Barge Lines expand service to the Missouri River.



Florence Narrows Dike along the Missouri River in Nebraska at river mile 665.3. This photo was taken in April of 1934. Photo provided